Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

receiving a packet at a first device in a stack of packet forwarding devices configured to direct the packet to a destination external to the stack;

identifying an exception associated with the packet; and

inserting a vector in the packet for delivering the packet to an exception processor being shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

inserting a flag in the packet that indicates the packet is associated with the identified exception.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

using the vector and a table to determine a port for sending the packet from the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the vector includes a bit identifying the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

removing the vector from the packet for delivering the packet to the exception processor shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the packet is delivered over a transmission line in an aggregate of transmission lines to the exception processor shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the vector includes bits respectively identifying the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

8. (Previously Presented) A computer program product, tangibly embodied on a computer-readable medium, the computer program product being operable to cause a machine to:

receive a packet at a first device in a stack of packet forwarding devices configured to direct the packet to a destination external to the stack;

identify an exception associated with the packet; and

insert a vector in the packet for delivering the packet to an exception processor being shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

9. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 8 being further operable to cause a machine to:

insert a flag in the packet that indicates the packet is associated with the identified exception.

10. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 8 being further operable to cause a machine to:

use the vector and a table to determine a port for sending the packet from the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.

11. (Original) The computer program product of claim 8 wherein the vector includes a bit identifying the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.

12. (Original) A computer program product of claim 8 being further operable to cause a machine to:

remove the vector from the packet for delivering the packet to the exception processor shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

13. (Original) The computer program product of claim 8 wherein the packet is delivered over a transmission line in an aggregate of transmission lines to the exception processor shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

14. (Original) The computer program product of claim 8 wherein the vector includes bits respectively identifying the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

15. (Previously Presented) A packet forwarder comprises:

a process stored on a computer to

receive a packet at a first device in a stack of packet forwarding devices configured to direct the packet to a destination external to the stack;

identify an exception associated with the packet; and

insert a vector in the packet for delivering the packet to an exception processor being shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

16. (Previously Presented) The packet forwarder of claim 15 further comprising:

a process stored on a computer to insert a flag in the packet that indicates the packet is associated with the identified exception.

17. (Previously Presented) The packet forwarder of claim 15 further comprising:

a process stored on a computer to use the vector and a table to determine a port for sending the packet to the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.

18. (Previously Presented) A system comprising:

a switch device capable of,

receiving a packet at a first device in a stack of packet forwarding devices configured to direct the packet to a destination external to the stack;

identifying an exception associated with the packet; and

inserting a vector in the packet for delivering the packet to an exception processor being shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

19. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18 wherein the switch device is further capable of:

inserting a flag in the packet that indicates the packet is associated with the identified exception.

20. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18 wherein the switch device is further capable of:

using the vector and a table to determine a port for sending the packet from the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.

21. (Previously Presented) A packet forwarding device comprising:

an input port for receiving a packet;

an output port for delivering the received packet; and

a switch device capable of,

receiving a packet at a first device in a stack of packet forwarding devices configured to direct the packet to a destination external to the stack,

identifying an exception associated with the packet, and

inserting a vector in the packet for delivering the packet to an exception processor being shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

22. (Previously Presented) The packet forwarding device of claim 21 wherein the switch device is further capable of:

inserting a flag in the packet that indicates the packet is associated with the identified exception.

23. (Previously Presented) The packet forwarding device of claim 21 wherein the switch device is further capable of:

using the vector and a table to determine a port for sending the packet from the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.

24. (Previously Presented) A router comprising:

a switch device capable of

receiving a packet at a first device in a stack of packet forwarding devices configured to direct the packet to a destination external to the stack;

identifying an exception associated with the packet; and

inserting a vector in the packet for delivering the packet to an exception processor being shared by the packet forwarding devices in the stack.

25. (Previously Presented) The router of claim 24 wherein the switch device is further capable of inserting an exception flag in the packet that indicates the packet is associated with the identified exception.

26. (Previously Presented) The network switch of claim 24 wherein the switch device is further capable of using the device vector and an exception routing table to determine a port for sending the packet from the first device in the stack of packet forwarding devices.